

## APPENDIX V

### Secretary's Report by Dr. S. N. Prasad

Respected Mr. President, Mr. Governor, Mr. Education Minister, Distinguished Scholars, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are meeting here today after a longer-than-usual interval. We could not meet earlier owing to circumstances beyond our control. Nevertheless, I owe you an apology on that account.

I now present to you a brief report on the development in the field of archives in the country since the last session of the Commission. In this I shall mention only the salient features of our activities, the details of which are available in the paper on the Development of Archives, presented to you separately.

**I. Plan Developments:** With almost all its Fifth Plan schemes already cleared by the Planning Commission and sanctioned by the Government of India, the National Archives of India was engaged during the past two years in quiet consolidation rather than expansion. The Jaipur Record Centre of the National Archives of India has started functioning, with records pouring in and repair and reprography facilities being installed. Similarly the distribution of imported preservative material to the State Archives has already been started by the National Archives of India, and arrangements are being finalised between the National Archives of India and the Orissa State Archives to locate, at Bhubaneswar, a Unit of the National Archives of India to survey important private records in the State.

Distinguished members of the Commission will be happy to learn that the Guru Nanak University, Saurashtra University, Utkal University, Bhagalpur University and the Kurukshetra University have initiated steps to set up archival cells in their respective Universities with the help of the University Grants Commission. An Archival Cell has been established in Meghalaya also under the Directorate of Public Instruction of that Government at Shillong. The Andhra Pradesh State Archives has established one more regional office in the Andhra University Campus at Waltair. The State Archives of Bihar has opened a regional archives at Darbhanga, and it has also received Government sanction for establishing an archives centre at Ranchi. It has also set up a separate section for repair and rehabilitation of Archives. The State Archives of Uttar Pradesh has taken steps for the establishment of a regional office at Nainital.

It is regrettable, however, that no new State Archives was opened during the year, and even the large State of Himachal Pradesh is still without any State Archives.

**II. Expenditure :** The expenditure of the National Archives of India continued its upward trend during these years. The total expenditure during 1976-77 and 1977-78 was over Rs. 93 lakhs.

It is, however, disappointing to record that the expenditure of the various State Archives during these years did not show any element of uniformity. I am happy that the total expenditure on archives in Andhra Pradesh came to about Rs. 30 lakhs in the years 1976-77 and 1977-78. Tamil Nadu also has spent about Rs. 30 lakhs, Rajasthan about 19 lakhs and Maharashtra 14 lakhs during this period. But Kerala has spent only Rs. 10 lakhs and Orissa Rs. 4.37 lakhs in the two years under review. Information is incomplete about several states.

**III. Archival Buildings:** Construction of suitable archival buildings has repeatedly been urged in my earlier reports and in the Resolutions of the Commission. It is a basic necessity that all archives offices should be housed in specially designed and properly equipped building of their own. We know that many states have their own archival buildings and some others are taking steps to have them constructed. Although some concrete progress has been reported in this respect from Rajasthan and from Assam, and the building of the National Archives of India branch office at Bhopal has been enlarged, the other proposals still remain in the blue print stage. Some more positive steps have been taken towards building the long awaited Annexe of the National Archives of India also. The model of the annexe submitted by a private architect has been approved and the Government of India has already accorded the necessary financial sanction for its construction. The detailed construction drawings are now being discussed and prepared by the architect in consultation with the Central Public Works Department, and actual construction work is expected to begin by April this year.

**IV. Records Management:** With the progressive implementation of the Archival Policy Resolution of 1972 by the Government of India, the management of records is becoming increasingly important. The Resolution, designed to establish closer liaison between the Archivist and record creating agencies at all stages, is already showing some results. Preparation of Retention Schedules and proper appraisal of records has started in many Ministries of the Government of India. Several State Governments are also considering issue of similar Archival Policy Resolutions, though it appears that except Delhi none has issued it so far. I must admit that the problem of records management is forbidding in magnitude and complexity. But to ensure efficiency as well as economy in the functioning of all Governments, scientific record management is absolutely essential, and deserves urgent attention of the authorities concerned.

Despite limitation of staff, the National Archives has completed the final appraisal of more than two lakhs of non-current files of the Government of India in two years. This is, however, only a small fraction of the total bulk of records awaiting appraisal. Some Archives Departments of the State Governments have also reported substantial progress. The Andhra Pradesh State Archives finally appraised about 49,000 files during the year 1976-77 and the State Archives of West Bengal appraised about 16,000 files. But on the whole the picture is far from satisfactory. Many of the States do not have even retention schedules to guide them in appraising records, and the State Archives do not have adequate information about bulk of non-current records to be appraised. It is necessary that the State Archives and the various Departments of State Governments work in close

cooperation to evolve a definite policy in regard to this vital aspect of public administration. The offices and Departments of the State Governments should be advised to provide the State Archives with information about their bulk of non-current records and annual accruals of such records.

**V. Training :** The Institute of Archival Training, founded in December, 1976, has commenced its third session, as the second batch of trainees in One Year Diploma Course completed their training in August last. For the benefit of records officers and personnel engaged in conservation work, the National Archives is also continuing the short-term training in records management and preservation.

For the purpose of having trained personnel in the field of record management, the Institute has introduced a Correspondence Course in archives keeping. Its first session commenced in August, 1978, with about 150 students on its rolls. The detailed administrative arrangements and the curriculum for the Correspondence Course were finalised in cooperation with the State Archives. This scheme proposes to meet the problem of paucity of trained personnel in the field of archives, and it will certainly be a boon to those employees of archives offices who are not in a position to avail themselves of the facilities of the One Year Diploma Course conducted by the Institute of Archival Training at New Delhi.

**VI. Access to Records :** No significant change took place in the rules governing access to records in the custody of the National Archives of India or of the State Archives. Many restrictions still apply to records of even the 'open' period. The position needs review at a high level, at the Centre as well as in the States, to liberalise the access rules, so that genuine research is encouraged and facilitated.

**VII. Accessions :** (a) **Public Records :** Acute shortage of storage space as I have mentioned earlier, prevented the National Archives of India from undertaking any major accessioning programme. In 1976-77 and 1977-78, only about 2700 files of the Ministries of External Affairs, Home Affairs, Works and Housing, and of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Consultate General of India at Shanghai and Viceroy's Executive Council, and authenticated copies of 389 bills passed by the various State Legislatures and assented to by the President of India, were received for custody. The Record Centre of the National Archives of India at Jaipur has received for custody 2224 non-current files from the Salt Commissioner's Office and Hindustan Salt Ltd., Jaipur. The position is better in the States in this respect. Among others, the State Archives of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Union Territory of Delhi have shown considerable progress in accessioning public records.

(b) **Private Papers :** The Private Papers acquired by the National Archives during 1976-77 and 1977-78 include those of Sir Sita Ram, Mir Mushtaq Ahmed and Raja of Kotwara.

It is heartening to learn that the Maharashtra State Archives have just found about 300 documents of the 18th and 19th centuries throwing light on the Angre family of Kolaba.

The National Archives acquired 15 collections of records of Indian interest in microfilm from the U.K., U.S.A., Australia, Greece and Switzerland. These collections include 42 rolls of Linlithgow Papers (1937-43), 82 rolls of the old files of the 'Daily Worker' (1930-47), 41 rolls of the Factory Records (1665-1781) of the East India Company and 29 rolls of the records of the United States Government's Department of State (1906-1929).

A list of public records, private papers, microfilm rolls and rare books acquired during 1976-77 by the State Archives and Learned Institutions, to given in Paper No. III (List of Accessions) presented separately.

**VIII. Publications:** Further progress was made in the Publication programmes, both at the Centre and in the States. One volume each of the Fort William-India House Correspondence, Proceedings of the Indian Historical Records Commission, Index to Papers Read at Indian Historical Records Commission Sessions, Resolutions of the Indian Historical Records Commission Volume II (1948-73), Catalogue of the Historical Maps of the Survey of India, (1700-1900), Bulletin of Research Theses and Dissertations, and National Register of Private Records were brought out by the National Archives of India. The National Archives has also published during this period two composite issues of the Indian Archives Journal. I am happy to report that the National Archives of India have also brought out in cyclostyled form "*A Guide to the Records in the National Archives of India, Part II; covering records of Home Department/Ministry of Home Affairs: (1748-1957)*". A total of 10 publications were, thus, brought out by the National Archives during these two years.

State Archives of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Union Territory of Goa made impressive progress in implementing their respective publication programmes, and in this context particular mention should be made of the Guide to the Records in State Archives of West Bengal, Part I, 1758-1858.

**IX. Reference Media :** Progress has also been reported in the preparation of reference media, both in the National Archives and in the States. In the former, work is in progress on the Foreign Department (Secret Consultations), 1800-1811 and Public Works Department, 1864-1923. As for private papers in the National Archives, finding aids for a number of collections, including the papers of Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Dadabhai Naoroji, Raja Mahendra Pratap, B. D. Chaturvedi, P. S. S. Aiyer and P. K. Malaviya have been prepared.

The State Archives of Andhra Pradesh has printed the first volume of the 'Mughal Archives'—a descriptive catalogue of documents pertaining to the reign of Shah Jahan (1628-1658). It has also started cataloguing of similar documents relating to Aurangzeb's reign. A Descriptive List of the Records of the Huzur Office of the former Princely State of Travancore was prepared by the Kerala State Archives. The Nagaland State Archives has prepared an alphabetical index to the records in its custody. The State Archives of Bihar, Orissa, Punjab, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal have also reported good progress in this important field.

**X. Scientific Aids to the Preservation of Records:** The Research Laboratory of the National Archives tested many samples of papers with a view to finding out their suitability for use for permanent records. After thorough and painstaking tests, an improved variety of paper manufactured by the Ballarpur Paper and Straw Board Mills was found to be adequately answering the purpose. Its cost is now being worked out. The National Archives also rendered technical information and advice to the State Governments, Universities, Learned Institutions and individuals on request.

**XI. Other Developments :** A concerted effort has been made by the National Archives and most of the State Archives to come closer to the public, as no great progress is possible without a public awareness of the value and importance of our archival heritage. For the first time, an Archives Week was organised in our country from 7th to 13th August, 1978. The National Archives and many State Archives held exhibitions of documents on this occasion and invited 'Open House' visits to their Record Rooms, Preservation and Reprography facilities. The response has been very encouraging, and many thousands of our common citizens, young students and members of the intelligentsia learnt for the first time the unique value and worth of the records preserved in our archival repositories. Many talks on the radio and TV were also arranged during the Archives Week.

With the same objective, a documentary film has been planned and prepared on the National Archives. This film, giving glimpses of work of different types in the National Archives, with an appropriate commentary, is expected to be released for showing in all cinema houses very soon.

The French records of the pre-merger period in the Pondicherry archives have been placed under the administrative control of the National Archives. It is proposed to develop this repository as a full fledged Regional Branch, equipped with repair and conservation facilities. The Government of Pondicherry is now working out details for setting up its own archives to preserve all the post-merger records.

There is another new and interesting development which deserves notice of the Commission. With special funds provided by the U.G.C., the Government College Ajmer, has purchased the historical records of the old Thikana of Pisangan, covering the period 1748—1946. These records are being kept in the Government College, Ajmer, and Dr. V. S. Bhargava, Head of the Department of History of the College, has also prepared descriptive lists of the records of the erstwhile Thikanas of Masuda, Kharwa and Bhinai with grants in aid given by the Indian Council of Historical Research. While the preparation of descriptive lists or catalogues of such records is very desirable and these should be included in the National Register of Private Records, the Commission would perhaps like to be assured that the old records physically taken over and kept in the college would be properly cared for and made accessible to all research scholars, and would not be allowed to decay or disappear after a few decades. I need hardly remind the Commission that one of the premier universities in North India acquired some microfilms of records from

the U.K. some years back, but today these microfilms are neither well-preserved nor easily accessible to scholars. To avoid such unfortunate results, it appears necessary that records are either kept only in major repositories or proper facilities are provided, on a permanent basis, for records kept in other institutions.

And now I make my last bow before this august Commission, hoping to retire and lay down my office in a few months. It has been a privilege and an honour to be the Secretary of the Indian Historical Records Commission for nearly a decade, and I am deeply grateful to you for your unfailing consideration and support extended to me. With your guidance and support, this past decade has seen an alround and accelerated development in the field of Archives in the country. No less than six new State Archives came into existence during this period. Many of the older States Archives enlarged and intensified their activities. The National Archives has doubled its activities and professional staff, and trebled the number of its Regional Branches. Under the Archival Policy Resolution, it has assumed vast new responsibilities in the field of Record Management. The Archival Training Institute has been set up with four different types of courses to meet different requirements of the country as well as of the neighbouring countries. As a recognition of the new responsibilities and activities of the National Archives, its status has been raised from a "Subordinate" to an "Attached Office" of the Ministry of Education, Social Welfare and Culture. Strong professional bonds have been forged between the National Archives and the different State Archives, which now work in the closest cooperation and co-ordination without any infringement of the autonomy of each. Whether in devising and preparing training courses or in re-organisation work concerning the National Register of Private Records, or in making bulk imports of preservative material to meet the requirements of the National Archives of India as well as of the State Archives, the closest co-operation and coordination is evident, and I and my esteemed colleagues in the States have learnt fully to trust and rely on one another's assistance. The same spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance has been extended to the entire region with the formation of South and West Asia Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (SWARBICA), which has Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran as its Members. Under bilateral arrangements, Indian consultants have been called to Indonesia, Singapore, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Kenya, while trainees from Malaysia, Singapore, Nepal, Afghanistan, Kenya and Nigeria have worked in India. The international archival community and UNESCO have recognised the status of archives in our country and the competence of our Archivists, who are now accepted as comparable to the best in the world.

But while much has been done, much more remains to be done, to ensure the preservation and utilization of the unique archival wealth of our great country. There are tremendous problems and tasks awaiting urgent attention. I have every confidence that this august Commission and my successor will successfully tackle and overcome these problems and tasks. Once again I express my deepest gratitude and appreciation for your consideration and support.



Shri S. A. I. Tirmizi, Joint Secretary,  
Indian Historical Records Commission.